



# CT State Library

## *Office of the State Librarian*

### Appropriations Committee Testimony

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Connecticut State Library

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Good morning Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Kendall Wiggin and for the past 16 years I have been proud to serve as your State Librarian.

I realize that you are grappling with difficult budget decisions. I know that the cuts to the State Library are some of the most severe I have faced. The proposed budget represents nearly a 30% cut in the State Library's budget. It eliminates 5 long standing statewide programs and carries forward the 5% rescissions for most of the remaining line items. In addition to zero funding, Governor's Bill No. 942, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION would repeal the statutes for all but one of the programs.

**Gone - The Connecticard Program.** For 42 years Connecticut citizens have directly benefited from this program by being able to freely borrow books and other library materials from any public library in the state. Last year, towns shared their collections loaning \$68 million worth of items (4.5 million items) to residents of other towns. In return the State Library will reimburse these towns \$950,000 for these loans made to non-residents. All funding goes directly to the local library. Without this funding, towns will have no incentive to open their libraries to non-residents and this cost effective program will collapse.

**Gone - the grant program for local humanities institutions** established in 1985. The Connecticut Humanities Council receives a little over \$2 million in state funds through the State Library. In turn this leverages another \$4 million in public and private funds to provide grants to local historical societies for exhibitions and programs exploring our state's rich history and book-based facilitated discussions



for all ages in libraries across the state. In the past two years the Humanities Council has supported 153 organizations and 240 programs, serving more than 1 million people in Connecticut. Without the state funding support for local cultural programs; programs such as Book Voyagers, which helps families and youth; the Connecticut history.org website, which attracted 47,500 unique visits and 65,000 page downloads in January 2015 alone; as well as several technical support and capacity building programs would dry up.

**Gone - The Cooperating Library Service Unit Program (CLSU)** established in 1988. The State Library currently provides the Connecticut Library Consortium (CLC) with a \$332,000 operating grant. *Note, the CLC was formed in 2003 from a merger of four CLSUs. The four boards determined that one statewide cooperative would provide greater efficiencies and savings to all of Connecticut's libraries.* The CLC is a separate not-for-profit so repealing the CLSU statute would not eliminate the CLC, but would end the state funding, which is over half of its budget, and put the future of the organization and its services in jeopardy. The CLC negotiates and administers statewide contracts for library books and other products saving public, school and academic libraries over \$7.1 million each year. Libraries are rapidly evolving and library staff need to constantly update their skills. Last year the CLC provided 225 continuing education opportunities for libraries statewide to be more efficient, effective and knowledgeable in assisting the citizens of Connecticut.

**Gone - Grants to Public Libraries** established in 1967. The state has been providing incentive funding to public libraries since 1893. Through this state and local partnership, residents of Connecticut have benefited from a very efficient and effective system of independently operated public libraries working in close cooperation. Instead of reducing funding for libraries, we should be increasing state aid, especially for our urban libraries as they struggle to provide basic literacy service; financial literacy, digital literacy; access to government services and so much more. This is not the time to eliminate the legal structure that Section 11-24b provides. This law ensures that principal public libraries receive adequate local funding; provide equal access to all residents; don't charge

residents for library services; participate in Connecticard; and submit annual statistics to the State Library.

**Gone - the Computer Access Program.** Over the past 7 years, Concepts for Adaptive Learning (CfAL), on behalf of the Connecticut State Library and the Connecticut Commission for Educational Technology, has trained, given computers, a year of technical support, and a year of high speed internet service to more than 1,600 low-income families, touching the lives of more than 5,500 people, including more than 3,300 disadvantaged students living in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury. This program currently can't accommodate the number of families that wish to participate. Without this grant, CfAL will have to stop the program altogether.

At just 41 cents per capita, Connecticut ranks 35th in the nation in direct state aid to public libraries. Elimination of Connecticard and Grants to Public Libraries will drop Connecticut's direct aid to just 8 cents per capita and drop Connecticut's ranking to 42nd in the nation.

The elimination of Connecticard and State Aid will result in a loss of approximately \$500,000 in Federal Library funds, which will result in the loss of additional services that support local libraries, such as Connecticard Delivery.

The funding for the State Library has been declining for years. For example, our current funding is 21% below what was appropriated in FY 2009.

Support for the Humanities Council is down 18% for the same time period. *Note in 2009 the funds for the Humanities Council were appropriated in the Commission on Culture and Tourism's budget.*

Staffing at the State Library has dropped 6% since FY2009 and 22% in the past 15 years.

The library and humanities programs that are being proposed for elimination in this budget are not broken, yet without funding, they will break. Gone will be the

regional efficiencies that we have perfected over decades and the opportunity to deliver hundreds of millions in savings to towns and cities in the years ahead.

In the Governor's FY 2016 - FY 2017 Biennial budget address he noted that our forbearers "built great schools, libraries, and parks across 169 beautiful cities and towns." He noted that "we inherited these things. They were passed down to us. Entrusted for safe keeping." I believe that and I look forward to working with you in the months ahead to ensure the safe keeping of our library system.

Thank you for this opportunity to come before you today and now I would be glad to answer any questions.